

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COUNCIL MEETING**

**LOCATION: Dover Public Library  
35 the Plaza  
Dover, De 19901**

**Thursday, January 17, 2019  
9:30 a.m.**

### **AGENDA**

#### **Council Members**

Ronald Mears, Chairperson	Ronald Breeding, Vice Chairperson	Ed Lewandowski
Joseph Smack	Brenda Bramble	Clyde Shipman
Jim White	Isaac Daniels	

#### **Staff**

Ray Bivens, Director	Matt Ritter	Greg Abbott	Jim Hall
Bob Ehemann	Esther Knotts	Wayne Kline	Eric Dawson
Matt Chesser			

#### **I. Introductions/Announcements**

- A. Chairman Ron Mears called the council meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. and the Council members introduced themselves.
- B. Ron Breeding provided an overview of the meeting and explained the role of the Council stating that they serve in an advisory capacity to the Governor and the Department. He stated each Council member was provided a copy of all written comments, in advance of the meeting, for review.
- C. Greg Abbott and Wayne Kline made a presentation regarding surf fishing and permit sales. On behalf of the Division, Greg proposed limiting the number of surf permits issued annually and increasing the cost of surf fishing permits.
- D. The Council heard public comment and Division staff answered questions from the public. The following individuals made public comment: Mike Mathisen, Marcie Rosario, John McDaniel, Adam Hynson, Harry Aiken, Charles Turnbaugh, Chris Connolly, Michael Magee, Floyd Morton, Bruce West, Jim Haug, Bill Justis, Gary Rudden, Christopher Oster, Dave Pitcher, Chad Bayless, Christopher Permar, Eric Burnley. Public comments indicated both support of and opposition to the Division's proposal with both sides agreeing that the Division needs additional enforcement staff at the beach parks. At 11:01 a.m., Ron Breeding closed the floor to public comment.

Marcie Rosario asked what the fine is if someone is not fishing. Wayne Kline explained that without a surf permit fines can total between \$200.00 and \$250.00 for Delaware residents. The fine for residents with a surf permit is \$107.00 (includes court cost, etc.). The fines go up with each repeat offense.

Sue Meding asked, “if an enforcement officer issues an order to appear, does the officer also have to go to court?” She asked if having to appear in court would keep officers from issuing a summons and if that takes enforcement officers off of the beach. Wayne responded that having to appear in court would not dissuade officers from writing a summons. He stated that court appearances, for tickets that are written in the summer, usually take place in the fall after the busy summer season ends.

Wayne Kline read, verbatim, the regulation and description of “actively engaged.” He stated that the Attorney General’s Office helped to write the regulations.

Marcie Rosario asked if people who receive a ticket are escorted off the beach. Wayne stated that it was up to the discretion of the enforcement officer who is issuing the ticket.

Ron Breeding asked the Council for comment. Jim White “concurred” with the Division’s proposal. Ed Lewandowski encouraged attendees to keep calling legislators to make them aware of the additional enforcement needs within Parks.

Ron Mears asked if the Council was able to make a decision. Clyde Shipman stated that the Division needs to continue to ensure that surf permit holders are “actively engaged” in fishing when they are on the beach. Clyde stated that the Division does need additional enforcement staff on the beach. He stated that he likes the idea of revoking the surf permit of violators after their second offense.

Clyde also said that prior to purchasing the surf permit for the first time, visitors should be required to watch a surf fishing “how to” video. After viewing the video, visitors would receive a certificate which they would be required to present at the time of purchase.

Clyde encouraged the attendees to get their permits early. He stated that most fishermen get their permits early in the year so limiting the number of permits issued shouldn’t pose a problem for the fishermen.

Joe Smack inquired as to whether litter, camping toilets, etc. are a problem on the beach. One attendee stated that the fishermen clean up after themselves. John McDaniel stated that, “the posers leave stuff, not the actual fishermen.” Mike Mathisen shared that his community (Seaside Villas) volunteers with DNREC.

Chairman Mears called for a motion regarding the proposal. Ed Lewandowski made a motion to increase the cost of the annual surf permit as proposed. Joe Smack and Jim White seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Clyde Shipman made a motion to limit the number of surf permits issued annually to 17,000. Ed Lewandowski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

At 11:15 a.m., Chairman Mears called for a break in the meeting as indicated on the agenda.

At 11:22 a.m., Chairman Mears called the meeting to order.

## **II. Official Business/Council Activities**

### **A. Approval of Minutes**

Ron Mears asked for Council approval of the November 2018 meeting minutes.

Greg Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes. Ed Lewandowski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

### **B. Chairman's Report**

Ron Mears asked the Council to review the Division's Quarterly Report and to reach out to staff if they had questions or concerns.

### **C. Council Member Reports**

#### **1. Fort Delaware Society- *Esther Knotts reported.***

Edith Mahoney contacted the Division and indicated that she will not be able to attend any future meetings due to health concerns. Edith reached out to the Society president to make him aware.

#### **2. Natural Areas Advisory Council- *Ed Lewandowski reported.***

The Division will be conducting interviews to fill the vacancy left by the departure of Eileen Butler, Nature Preserve Manager.

#### **3. Wildlife Management Committee- *Clyde Shipman reported.***

Ninety hunters participated in a public archery hunt at Brandywine Creek State Park. Twenty five deer were harvested.

Archery hunting began on Thompson's Island on December 4<sup>th</sup> and will continue through the end of January.

A hunt was held at the Carpenter Recreation Area in White Clay Creek, nine deer were harvested. The Division is evaluating the deer spotlight numbers to determine if managed hunts are needed at White Clay.

Cape Henlopen State Park will be closed on January 24<sup>th</sup> for a managed deer hunt. This may have been the first time in Parks' history that Cape Henlopen has been closed for hunting. Ron Mears asked what the impact to the park visitors will be; Matt Ritter explained that the park is being to ensure safety.

Matt Ritter shared that Killens Pond will be holding a managed deer hunt next week.

#### **4. Resident Curatorship Committee- *Joseph Smack reported.***

A seasonal employee has been hired to help promote the curatorship program. She will be actively seeking curators for Division properties.

Jim Hall shared that the Lums Mill House is continuing to degrade.

Ray stated that the Sussex Land Trust will be holding a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Wolfe Neck property. Joe Smack will be invited to attend.

Joe commended the Division on the dedication of the Auburn Valley State Park. He said it, “was a nice event and that the Division did a really good job of putting together an outdoor event.”

**D. Annual Elections**

Ron Mears called for nominations. Joe Smack nominated Ron Mears for the Council Chair position. Ed Lewandowski seconded the nomination. Ron Breeding called for additional nominations for Council Chair. Hearing none, he closed the nominations. The Council voted unanimously that Ron Mears will continue as Council Chair.

Ron Mears thanked Ron Breeding for the work he has done as the Council Vice-Chair. Ron Mears called for nominations for Council Vice-Chair. Clyde Shipman nominated Ron Breeding. Greg Johnson seconded the nomination. Ron Mears called for a vote. The Council voted unanimously that Ron Breeding will serve as the Vice-Chair of the Council.

**III. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**IV. Staff Reports – *No reports were given.***

**V. Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds – *Ray reported.***

- A. The Division received \$1M in grant requests. The requests are in the Secretary’s Office awaiting signatures.

**VI. Old Business**

**A. K-9 Program**

The program is receiving great press.

Ron Mears asked if Park Rangers manage hunting violations or if Fish and Wildlife agents are called in to handle those. Matt Ritter explained that if a violation takes place on Park property, our Rangers handle it.

**B. Pickleball**

The Sussex Land Trust applied for an LWCF grant. They have purchased a piece of property in Sussex County and the First State Pickleball Club has the option of signing an agreement to build courts on this property. The Division will continue to assist the Club through this process but the courts will not be built on State Park land.

Pickleball courts will be constructed at the Lovering Lane complex and possibly at Killens Pond.

Matt Ritter introduced two members of his staff (Eric Dawson and Jim Hall) who were attending the meeting.

## **VII. New Business**

Clyde stated that he would like the Division to expand some of our public swimming areas – possibly at Fenwick Ocean. Ray stated that the Division is working with the Fenwick Chamber to possibly expand swimming.

Demolition will begin at Baynard Stadium on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Wilmington State Park Office will be moving into the Blue Ball Barn temporarily. New Castle County staff will be moving out of the maintenance building. Division staff met with the architect regarding the new Wilmington State Parks office complex. It will be designed to look like a college complex. Matt Ritter stated that Salesianum is a great partner.

The City gave naming rights of the stadium to Salesianum; the stadium will no longer be called Baynard Stadium.

The temporary bleachers which the Division purchased last year will be relocated. Part of the bleachers will be taken to Alapocas Run State Park and the other part will be given to the City.

Joe Smack asked which contractor will be completing the demolition and construction. Ray will research that information and send it to Joe Smack.

The Division will be installing 18 more automated fee collections machines before summer. Greg Abbott shared that the machines cost \$9K each and can be paid off in one year. Matt Ritter stated that the Division should experience fewer losses with these machines. Currently, visitors who self-register are putting cash into an iron ranger. The iron rangers are often robbed. Greg said that the automated fee machines will also assist with the daily report of receipts.

Ray shared that citizens in the State of Connecticut are charged an additional \$10.00 when they register their cars. That money is earmarked for Connecticut State Parks. This eliminates the need to collect entry fees from residents entering their State Parks.

Ray stated that the Division continues to struggle to recruit ocean lifeguards. We are focusing on actively recruiting new staff and have developed a new salary structure that will compensate employees for certifications, experience and training.

The Council discussed the surf permit fee increase. Greg Abbott stated that the Division expects the increase to generate an additional \$200K. That increase will not even cover the additional impacts of the mandatory increase to minimal wage and the \$500 raise for merit employees which were approved during the last budget session.

Ron Mears stated that the Division “has to” go to the legislators and get approval for Park Patrol Officers to issue citations.

## **VIII. Upcoming Events**

Ed Lewandowski volunteered to attend the JFC (Joint Finance Committee) hearing to share the written public comments received by the Division and to discuss the issues and concerns raised by the public at today's Council meeting. He will focus on the need for additional enforcement officers and enforcement privileges for seasonal patrol officers. Ron Mears also plans to attend.

Parks School will be held on Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>. John Kennedy will be the key-note speaker. There will also be eight breakout sessions. The event will take place at Dover Downs and Council is encouraged to attend.

The next Council meeting will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The location will be determined and Council will be notified.

Matt Ritter stated the key is focusing on enforcement. Visitors need to see additional rangers.

Brenda Bramble suggested making the *Tip411* app available to all fishermen. Ray stated that the app is currently available to everyone. Tips are received by all of the Division rangers.

Greg Johnson stated, "when we raise fees, the people who came today, want to see additional enforcement." He said if we can get extended authority for seasonal employees, "that will do a lot."

Matt Ritter stated there are three types of visitors who purchase surf permits; hard core fishermen, recreational fishermen, and partiers. Ron Mears said there is a fourth group; those who just want to ride on the beach. Jim White stated that in July and August people are not fishing. If you see a family on the beach, they are there to enjoy family time.

Isaac Daniels stated that he was surprised, "to not see partiers or posers" in attendance at today's meeting.

Ray stated that he and Wayne Kline conducted beach vehicle checks on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and found very few violations.

Greg Johnson runs on the Cape Henlopen beach. He said he sees some, "so called posers, but he does not see partiers". He said that visitors seem orderly, sedate, and pleasant.

Eric stated that the Division is purchasing a surf rake which costs \$64K. Swimming beaches are raked every day.

Ray shared that a disability complaint has been filed against the Division to allow air cannon bait casters on the beach. The Council stated they see this as a safety concern.

## **IX. Adjournment**

Ron Mears asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ed made a motion to adjourn, Ron Breeding seconded the motion The Council voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.